

Thomas Jefferson to George Washington, July 30, 1791, from the Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.

TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES D. S. MSS.

Philadelphia, July 30, 1791.

Sir, —I have the honour to inclose for your perusal a letter which I have prepared for Mr. Short.

The ill humour into which the French colonies are getting, and the little dependance on the troops sent thither, may produce a hesitation in the National Assembly as to the conditions they will impose in their constitution. In a moment of hesitation, small matters may influence their decision. They may see the impolicy of insisting on particular conditions which operating as grievances on us, as well as on their colonists, might produce a concert of action. I have thought it would not be amiss to trust to Mr. Short the sentiments in the cyphered part of the letter, leaving him to govern himself by circumstances whether to let them leak out at all or not, & whether so as that it may be known or remain unknown that they come from us. A perfect knowledge of his judgment & discretion leaves me entirely satisfied that they will be not used or so used, as events shall render proper. But if you think that the possibility that harm may be done, overweighs the chance of good, I would expunge them, as in the case of doubt it is better to say too little than too much.